

FACT SHEET

SUBJECT: Personal Internet/E-mail Use

1. PURPOSE. To provide guidance on what is and is not acceptable personal use of e-mail and the Internet.

2. FACTS.

a. Many civilian employees and soldiers at Fort Knox have access to both e-mail and the Internet. For most, access is as easy as turning on the computer at their desk. Having access to e-mail and the Internet can increase both the efficiency and the quality of an employee's work.

b. Along with the greater access has come a number of questions employees have about what is acceptable use of their e-mail and Internet capabilities. Can you e-mail your child at college? Can you give out your e-mail address to friends and family? Can you read personal e-mail messages during the duty day? Can you check your e-mail during duty time to determine if it is official or unofficial? What about staying late and getting on "Romance on Line?" Are there any limits on "surfing the web?"

c. The Army wants its employees to know how to use the Internet and how to e-mail each other. One way of encouraging employees to master cyberspace is to permit employees to use their government computer for personal matters within certain limitations.

d. Fort Knox and TRADOC policies on computer use are based upon guidance found in the Joint Ethics Regulation. This regulation permits personal use of a government computer (including Internet and e-mail access) if the use does not adversely affect the performance of official duties, if the use is made during the employee's personal time, if the use does not reflect adversely on the Federal Government, if the use does not overburden the communication system, and if the use does not create any significant additional cost to DoD.

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e. Fort Knox and TRADOC policies expand on these guidelines by specifically prohibiting personal Internet use to solicit, advertise, or engage in selling activities in support of a private business enterprise, to promote fundraising activities, to send chain letters, to surf or visit sexually oriented sites, to download sexually oriented material, or to send harassing e-mail. Employees must ordinarily limit personal use of Internet resources to before or after work hours and during lunch breaks or other authorized breaks. Any personal use of Internet resources during normal work hours should be "INFREQUENT" and "SHORT."

f. Employees who violate these policies are subject to disciplinary action. At Fort Knox, civilians have been suspended without pay from their jobs, received counseling, and had adverse information placed in their personnel files, while soldiers have received Article 15's and letters of reprimand for misuse of Internet resources. Personnel at other installations have also found themselves subject to severe disciplinary action for misuse of the Internet resources. For example, a captain at Wright Patterson Air Force Base was court-martialed for using his government computer to download pornographic material from the Internet. His sentence was 18 months confinement and a dismissal.

3. As always, civilian employees and military personnel should check with an ethics counselor before doing anything that may raise ethics issues. The attorneys within the Administrative Law Division of the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate are designated ethics advisors for Fort Knox. Their telephone number is 4-7414/4668.

VINCENT C. NEALEY
Chief, Administrative Law Division